

A
164 disease during the two last centuries, defy all
G calculation. In the thirty Guarany towns some
[165] thirty thousand persons died of the small-pox
in the year 1734.

ooo It is not true that the Spaniards and other
Europeans in America are exempted from small-
pox; but it cannot be doubted that the Indians
take it sooner, and more frequently die of it.
I am of opinion that their habit of body has
less strength to repel or overcome that poison.
They generally eat half-raw and unsalted meat;
they always go with their heads and feet bare;
they drink nothing but water, and that not of
the best kind, except at a few festive drinking
parties in the course of the year; all which
tend to weaken the stomach. The heat of the
sun, and the constant use of maize, cause a
ferment in their blood which, on the accession
of small-pox, very frequently proves fatal.
This must be understood of the pedestrian In-
A dians only, for the Abipones, and other eques-
164 trian Indians, who do not labour under those
miseries to which the pedestrians are subject,
generally have the small-pox in a milder form.

G In the year 1765 this plague carried off great
A numbers in the Spanish colonies. Having swept
731 away about twelve thousand persons in the thirty
165 Guarany towns, it spread to the distant hordes
164 of the savages scattered throughout Chaco, and

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

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though almost all took the infection, yet few ^G
 died in proportion to the number of the sick. ^A 731 ●
 I speak of the equestrians, who were saved by ¹⁶⁴
 the strength of their constitutions. In the ¹⁶⁵
 town which I founded for the Abipones, one
 woman only escaped the contagion, yet out of
 the many hundreds that took the disease,
 twenty alone fell victims to it.

Often no mention is made of the small-pox ⁰⁰⁰
 for many years amongst the Indians; but this
 calm is the sure forerunner of an approaching
 storm. We have always found the small pox
 break out first in the colonies of the Spaniards,
 and spread from thence to the farthest hordes
 of the Indians; who, having learnt from the ex-
 perience of their ancestors, to dread this disease
 as their death, separate from their hordesmen
 as soon as ever they have the least suspicion of
 its approach, and fly, some one way, some
 another, in precipitate haste. Upon this occa-
 sion they travel not in a straight line, but by
 various meanders and windings. That this
 method is superstitiously observed by the
 Lules, Isistines, Vilelas, Homoampas, and Chu-
 nipies, I was told by Fathers who had re-
 sided long amongst them. Through fear of the
 contagion, fathers desert their sick sons, and
 sons their fathers. They leave a pitcher of
 water, and some roasted maize at the sick